

## Sūrah Qadr

### Central Theme

In the preceding *sūrah*, it is pointed out that the revelation of the Qur'ān was a great blessing and favour of the Almighty.<sup>1</sup> The fact that it was safeguarded in written form to provide mankind with Divine Guidance is also referred to. Now, this *sūrah* deals with the topic of the revelation of the Qur'ān itself. A special reference is made to the night in which the Qur'ān was revealed together with a mention of its greatness and importance in relation to other nights. Although these matters pertain to the unknown, and a complete understanding of their nature is not possible, yet any disclosed portion is always beneficial to the seekers of truth.

The purpose of this delineation is to inform the people addressed that whatever attitude they adopt about this Book, they must first seriously contemplate on a few realities:

Firstly, this Book is not the result of some human whim; it is part of a Divine Scheme, and has been revealed under the direct surveillance of the Almighty Himself.

Secondly, this event is not temporary or transient in nature. Everyone should be aware that it has taken place in a night in which important decisions are made and executed. This night is superior to a thousand nights. Matters of paramount importance are settled and decided during it. Those who deprive themselves of its blessings cannot gain them in any other way.

Thirdly, the Book is totally free from any sort of evil interference from Satan as the night in which it was revealed has been specially protected from his intrusions and interventions.

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1. Recite [O Prophet!] Your Lord is the most Bounteous. He, who by the pen taught man what he did not know. [96:3-5]

## سورة القدر

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ (١) وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ (٢) لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ (٣) تَنَزَّلُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ أَمْرٍ (٤) سَلَامٌ هِيَ حَتَّى مَطْلَعِ الْفَجْرِ (٥)

Indeed, We sent it down in the Night of Destiny. And what do you imagine what the Night of Destiny is? Better is the Night of Destiny than a thousand months. The angels and the Spirit descend therein about all matters, by the permission of their Lord.

It is peace in its entirety. It remains until the appearance of dawn.

## Explanation

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ (١)<sup>2</sup>

In the previous *sūrah*, God's great blessing of providing guidance to His creation by revealing the Qur'ān is mentioned. Now in this *sūrah* without any prior introduction, it is stated that the Almighty had revealed it in the Night of Destiny. Though at first it seems that the accusative pronoun in the word أَنْزَلْنَاهُ does not have an antecedent, the placement of this *sūrah* after the previous one clearly indicates the antecedent. In fact, a little deliberation shows that this strongly supports the argument that every preceding *sūrah* has a deep coherent relationship, intrinsic as well as extrinsic, with the succeeding one.

The stress in the word إِنَّا (Indeed We) has a very special purpose. It is meant to dispel the doubt that the Qur'ān is the result of a human endeavour. It emphasizes that the Qur'ān is totally free from the evil inspiration and influences of Satan, as its opponents had contended. On the contrary, It has been solely revealed by the Almighty Himself to provide guidance and direction to mankind. لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ means the night in which matters are decided and their enforcement entrusted to the angles. It is the same night referred to in the following verses of Sūrah Dukhān:

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ إِنَّا كُنَّا مُنْذِرِينَ فِيهَا يُفْرَقُ كُلُّ أَمْرٍ حَكِيمٍ إِنَّا كُنَّا مُرْسِلِينَ (٤٤: ٣-٥)

We have revealed this (Qur'ān) in a blessed night. Verily, by its

2. Indeed, We sent it down in the Night of Destiny.

means, We are going to warn mankind. During this night all decrees of wisdom are assigned [to the angels], by Our special command. Indeed, We were to send a Prophet. (44:3-5)

If we reflect upon these verses, two of their implications become very clear:

Firstly, the Almighty has fixed a glorious night to specially hand over His decrees to the angels which are to be enforced by them in this world.

Secondly, the commissioning of the Prophet Muhammad (sws), his indhar<sup>3</sup> to the Quraysh and the revelation of the Qur'ān are among the Divine Decrees entrusted to the angels during this night, which is a clear proof of the extraordinary significance of these events. They are a part of an important plan devised by the Almighty which must reach completion.

The verse does not mean that the whole of the Qur'ān was revealed in a single night. All that it necessitates is that after a decision was made and the matter handed over to Gabriel, its first revelation took place during the night. Subsequently, the Qur'ān was revealed in sections over a period of twenty three years, which in no way contradicts the actual meaning of the verse.

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ (٤)<sup>4</sup>

The verse tells us that the greatness and splendour of the Night of Destiny is beyond the realms of imagination. The reason behind its majesty and grandeur is that important decisions about this world are made in it. When the days on which the petty administrations of this world chalk out their countries' future year projects have great importance, then how can the significance of the Night in which Divine Directives are issued forth to decide the fate of the whole universe be estimated.

These decisions are both positive and negative in their nature: At one place destruction might take place while at another something might be created. At some other place the pangs of punishment might be at work, while an adjacent place might witness God's blessings. But since these diverse manifestations emanate from the Almighty Whose justice, wisdom and mercy are beyond question and Whose schemes are based upon the collective good of man, all decisions are beneficial to man in their overall capacity and augur well for the future. This is precisely the reason why this night has been termed as the Night of Blessing in Sūrah

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3. To warn people of their fate in this as well as the next world.

4. And what do you imagine what the Night of Destiny is?

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Dukhān as quoted earlier, and why it has been called better than a thousand months. These attributes and characteristics of the night, as have been pointed out before, indicate to the adversaries of the Qur'ān that they are thoroughly mistaken if they consider a Book revealed in an exalted night to be a product of fantasy or sorcery. They have failed to distinguish a nugget from a pebble. There is no possibility that an evil inspiration can penetrate during this majestic night, as in this night the priceless pearls of revelation are showered by the Creator of the Heavens.

لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ<sup>5</sup> (٣)

This is an expression of the exaltedness of the Night. The relative state of being “better” is because it is favourable for the achievement of certain objectives. Just as in this material world there is a certain climate in a certain part of the year in which the seeds of a particular crop must be sown if they are to sprout, and any negligence to these factors will not yield the required produce even in some other prolonged periods of time; likewise, in the spiritual world also there are special days and times of the year which are set aside for special acts of worship. If they are offered during them, only then the required results are obtained, and any ignorance in this regard cannot be compensated in other periods of time even if their span is extended. A few examples will make this matter more clear. To offer the Friday prayers, a certain day has been set aside; similarly, a particular month has been fixed for fasting; for the offering of *hajj* and its rites too, certain days have been appointed by the Almighty. All these acts of worship have been made conditional to certain periods of time, during which their offering yields a reward that cannot be estimated.

The Night of Destiny also is no exception to this rule. A person who prostrates himself before the Almighty during this night might attain His nearness to an extent which he may never be able to emulate in a thousand other nights. The words “thousand nights” can be an expression of abundance as well as that of a relative significance over other nights, but there is no big difference between the meanings both imply. The purpose is to point out that a lot of spiritual wealth is hidden beneath the veils of this night. Lucky are the ones who strive and reap its bounties.

It is a universally acknowledged fact about this night that the revelation of the Qur'ān began during it, and that this night occurred during the month of Ramaḍān, as mentioned in the following verses of

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5. Better is the Night of Destiny than a thousand months.

Sūrah Baqarah: (١٨٥:٢) شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ (It is the month of Ramadān during which the Qur'ān was revealed, (2:185)). As far as the question about the exact date is concerned, it is difficult to answer it due to some disparities found in the Aḥādīth that deal with this subject. The only thing which can be said is that it occurred most probably during the last ten days of the month.

Due to the discrepancies in the Aḥādīth which relate to this matter some people have raised the question whether the night can occur in months other than Ramadān. Another question raised is that whether this night comes in every Ramadān, or does it have a different span. A satisfactory answer to these queries can only be given if the concerned Aḥādīth are critically analysed and examined, which is beyond the scope of this exegesis. I have indicated these difficulties so that our learned scholars can deliberate over them. If the Almighty provides this writer with an opportunity to write his proposed treatise upon Ḥādīth, these questions may be tackled therein.

تَنْزِيلُ الْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالرُّوحُ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ أَمْرٍ<sup>٦</sup>

It has been mentioned before that during this night matters are decided and assigned to the angles for their enforcement. This verse is an explanation of this fact. In this night, Archangel Gabriel and other angels descend upon the earth to carry out the tasks allocated to them by the Almighty, as is also mentioned in the following verses: فِيهَا يُفْرَقُ كُلُّ أَمْرٍ<sup>٥</sup> حَكِيمٍ أَمْرًا مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا (٤٤: ٥-٤) (during this Night all decrees of wisdom are assigned [to the angels] by Our special commandment, (44:4-5)).

The word الرُّوح (the Spirit), as is evident from the context is used for Gabriel. His name is specially mentioned here because he occupies a very high rank among the angels.

سَلَامٌ هِيَ حَتَّىٰ مَطْلَعِ الْفَجْرِ<sup>٧</sup>

This verse explains why the Night of Destiny is superior to a thousand months.

In the opinion of this writer, سَلَامٌ is the enunciative (*khabr*) of a suppressed inchoative (*mubtadā*). The complete sentence can be unfolded thus: هِيَ سَلَامٌ (It is peace in its entirety). An Inchoative is usually suppressed to emphasize the enunciative. Just as in the sentence

6. The angels and the Spirit descend therein about all matters, by the permission of their Lord.

7. It is peace in its entirety. It remains until the appearance of dawn.

عَدْلٌ (Zayd is justice) an exaggeration is implied by the word عَدْلٌ (justice), likewise, the word سَلَامٌ (peace in entirety) also has a strong element of hyperbole in it.

The word سَلَامٌ signifies safety and protection from every sort of risk and danger in general and from any satanic interference in particular. Just as during the time of revelation, all passages into the world beyond space and time are sealed to block the penetrations of Satan and his army, as is mentioned at various places in the Qur'ān, it looks as if during this night also these evil creatures are under Divine detention till the rise of dawn. Hence, they are unable to acquire the secrets of this night and are unable to cause disruptions in the blessings of this night.

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